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MRS. CAUDLE'S

CURTAIN LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

MR. CAUDLE HAS LENT FIVE POUNDS TO A FRIEND.

"You ought to be very rich, Mr. Caudle. I wonder who'd lend you five pounds? But so it is: a wife may work and may slave! Ha, dear! the many things that might have been done with five pounds! As if people picked up money in the street! But you always were a fool, Mr. Caudle! I've wanted a black satin gown these three years, and that five pounds would have pretty well bought it. But it's no matter how I go,—not at all. Every body says I don't dress as becomes your wife—and I don't: but what's that to you, Mr. Caudle? Nothing. Oh no! you can have fine feelings for everybody but those belonging to you. I wish people knew you, as I do—that's all. You like to be called liberal—and your poor family pays for it.

"All the girls want bonnets, and when they're to get 'em I can't tell. Half five pounds would have bought 'em—but now they must go without. Of course, *they* belong to you; and anybody but your own flesh and blood, Mr. Caudle.

"The man called for the water-rate, to-day; but I should like to know how people are to pay

taxes, who throw away five pounds to every fellow that asks them.

"Perhaps you don't know that Jack, this morning, knocked his shuttle-cock through his bed-room window. I was going to send for the glazier to mend it; but after you lent that five pounds I was sure we couldn't afford it. Oh, no! the window must go as it is; and pretty weather for a dear child to sleep with a broken window. He 's got a cold already on his lungs, and I shouldn't at all wonder if that broken window settled him—if the dear boy dies, his death will be upon his father's head; for I 'm sure we can't now pay to mend windows. We might though, and do a good many more things, if people didn't throw away their five pounds.

"Next Tuesday the fire-insurance is due. I should like to know how it 's to be paid! Why, it can't be paid at all. That five pounds would have just done it—and now, insurance is out of the question. And there never were so many fires as there are now. I shall never close my eyes all night,—but what 's that to you, so people can call you liberal Mr. Caudle? Your wife and children may all be burnt alive in their beds—as all of us to a certainty shall be, for the insurance *must* drop. And after we 've insured for so many years! But how, I should like to know, are people to insure who make ducks and drakes of their five pounds?

"I did think we might go to Margate this summer. There 's poor little Caroline, I 'm sure she wants the sea. But no, dear creature! she must stop at home—all of us must stop at home—she 'll go into a consumption, there 's no doubt of that; yes—sweet little angel!—I 've made up my mind to lose her, *now*. The child might have been

saved; but people can't save their children and throw away their five pounds too.

"I wonder where poor little Cherub is! While you were lending that five pounds, the dog ran out of the shop. You know, I never let it go into the street, for fear it should be bit by some mad dog, and come home and bite all the children. It wouldn't now at all astonish me if the animal was to come back with the hydrophobia and give it to all the family. However, what's your family to you, so you can play the liberal creature with five pounds?

"Do you hear that shutter, how it's banging to and fro? Yes,—I know what it wants as well as you, it wants a new fastening. I was going to send for the blacksmith to-day. But now it's out of the question: *now* it must bang of nights, since you've thrown away five pounds.

"Well, things are come to a pretty pass! This is the first night I ever made my supper off roast beef without pickles. But who is to afford pickles when folks are always lending five pounds?

"Ha! there's the soot falling down the chimney. If I hate the smell of anything, it's the smell of soot. And you know it; but what are my feelings to you? Sweep the chimney! Yes, it's all very fine to say, sweep the chimney—but how are chimneys to be swept—how are they to be paid for by people who don't take care of their five pounds?

"Do you hear the mice running about the room? *I* hear them. If they were only to drag you out of bed, it would be no matter. Set a trap for them! Yes, it's easy enough to say—set a trap for 'em. But how are people to afford the cheese, when every day they lose five pounds?

"Hark! I'm sure there's a noise down stairs.

It wouldn't at all surprise me if there were thieves in the house. Well, it *may* be the cat; but thieves are pretty sure to come in some night. There 's a wretched fastening to the back-door; but these are not times to afford bolts and bars, when fools wont take care of their five pounds.

"Mary Anne ought to have gone to the dentist's to-morrow. She wants three teeth taken out. Now, it can't be done. Three teeth that quite disfigure the child's mouth. But there they must stop, and spoil the sweetest face that was ever made. Otherwise, she 'd have been a wife for a lord. Now, when she grows up, who 'll have her? Nobody. We shall die, and leave her alone and unprotected in the world. But what do you care for that? Nothing; so you can squander away five pounds.

"And now, see, Mr. Caudle, what a misery you 've brought upon your wretched family! I can't have a satin gown—the girls can't have new bonnets—the water-rate must stand over—Jack must get his death through a broken window—our fire-insurance can't be paid, so we shall all fall victims to the devouring element—we can't go to Margate, and Caroline will go to an early grave—the dog will come home and bite us all mad—that shutter will go banging for ever—the soot will always fall—the mice never let us have a wink of sleep—thieves be always breaking in the house—and our dear Mary Anne be for ever left an unprotected maid,—and all, all, Mr. Caudle, because YOU WILL GO ON LENDING FIVE POUNDS!"

LECTURE II.

MR. CAUDLE HAS BEEN AT A TAVERN WITH A FRIEND.

POOR me! Ha! I'm sure I don't know who 'd be a poor woman! I don't know who 'd tie themselves up to a man, if they knew only half they 'd have to bear. A wife must stay at home, and be a drudge, whilst a man can go anywhere. It's enough for a wife to sit like Cinderella by the ashes, whilst her husband can go drinking and singing at a tavern. You never sing! How do I know you never sing? It 's very well for you to say so; but if I could hear you, I dare say you're among the worst of 'em.

"And now, I suppose, it will be the tavern every night. If you

think I'm going to sit up for you, Mr. Caudle, you're very much mistaken. No: and I'm not going to get out of my warm bed to let you in, either. No: nor Susan shan't sit up for you. No: nor you shan't have a latch-key. I'm not going to sleep with the door upon the latch, to be murdered before the morning.

"Faugh! Pah! Whewgh! That filthy tobacco smoke! It's enough to kill any decent woman. You know I hate tobacco, and yet you will do it. You don't smoke yourself! What of that? If you go among people who *do* smoke, you're just as bad, or worse. You might as well smoke — indeed, better. Better smoke yourself than come home with other people's smoke in your hair.

"I never knew any good come to a man who went to a tavern. Nice companions he picks up there! Yes; people who make it a boast to treat their wives like slaves, and ruin their families. There's that wretch, Prettyman. See what he's come to. He doesn't now get home till two in the morning; and then in what a state! He begins quarrelling with the door-mat, that his poor wife may be afraid to speak to him. A mean wretch! But don't you think I'll be like Mrs. Prettyman. No: I wouldn't put up with it from the best man that ever trod. You'll not make me afraid to speak to you, however you may swear at the door-mat. No, Mr. Caudle, that you won't.

"You don't intend to stay out till two in the morning! How do you know what you'll do when you get among such people? Men can't answer for themselves when they get boozing one with another. They never think of their poor wives, who are grieving and wearing themselves

out at home. A nice headache you 'll have to-morrow morning — or rather *this* morning; for it must be past twelve. You won't have a head-ache! It 's very well for you to say so, but I know you will; and then you may nurse yourself for me. Ha! that filthy tobacco again! No: I shall not go to sleep like a good soul! How 's people to go to sleep when they 're suffocated?

"Yes, Mr. Caudle, you 'll be nice and ill in the morning! But don't you think I 'm going to let you have your breakfast in bed, like Mrs. Pretty-man. I 'll not be such a fool. No: nor I won't have discredit brought upon the house by sending for soda-water early, for all the neighbourhood to say, 'Caudle was drunk last night!' No: I 've some regard for the dear children, if you havn't. No: nor you shan't have broth for dinner. Not a neck of mutton crosses my threshold, I can tell you.

"You won't want soda, and you won't want broth! All the better. You wouldn't get 'em if you did, I can assure you.——Dear, dear, dear! That filthy tobacco! I 'm sure it 's enough to make me as bad as you are. Talking about get-ting divorced,—I 'm sure tobacco ought to be good grounds. How little does a woman think when she marries, that she gives herself up to be poison-ed! You men contrive to have it all of your own side, you do. Now if I was to go and leave you and the children, a pretty noise there 'd be! You, however, can go and smoke no end of pipes—— You didn't smoke! It 's all the same, Mr. Cau-dle, if you go among smoking people. Folks are known by their company. You 'd better smoke yourself, than bring me home the pipes of all the world.

"Yes, I see how it will be. Now you've once gone to a tavern, you'll always be going. You'll be coming home tipsy every night; and tumbling down and breaking your leg, and putting out your shoulder; and bringing all sorts of disgrace and expense upon us. And then you'll be getting into a street fight—oh! I know your temper too well to doubt it, Mr. Caudle—and be knocking down some of the police. And then I know what will follow. It *must* follow. Yes, you'll be sent for a month or six weeks to the treadmill. Pretty thing that, for a respectable tradesman, Mr. Caudle, to be put upon the treadmill with all sorts of thieves and vagabonds, and—there, again, that horrible tobacco!—and riff-raff of every kind. I should like to know how your children are to hold up their heads, after their father has been upon the treadmill?——No: I *won't* go to sleep. And I'm not talking of what's impossible. I know it will all happen—every bit of it. If it wasn't for the dear children, you might be ruined and I wouldn't so much as speak about it, but—oh, dear, dear! at least you might go where they smoke *good* tobacco—but I can't forget that I'm their mother. At least, they shall have *one* parent.

"Taverns! Never did a man go to a tavern who didn't die a beggar. And how your pot-companions will laugh at you when they see your name in the *Gazette!* For it *must* happen. Your business is sure to fall off; for what respectable people will buy toys for their children of a drunkard? You're not a drunkard! No: but you will be—it's all the same.

"You've begun by staying out till midnight. By-and-by 't will be all night. But don't you think, Mr. Caudle, you shall ever have a key. I

know you. Yes; you'd do exactly like that Prettyman, and what did he do, only last Wednesday? Why, he let himself in about four in the morning, and brought home with him his pot-companion, Leanly. His dear wife woke at six, and saw Prettyman's dirty boots at her bed-side. And where was the wretch, her husband? Why, he was drinking down stairs — swilling. Yes; worse than a midnight robber, he'd taken the keys out of his dear wife's pockets—ha! what that poor creature has to bear!—and had got at the brandy. A pretty thing for a wife to wake at six in the morning, and instead of her husband to see his dirty boots!

"But I'll not be made your victim, Mr. Caudle, not I. You shall never get at my keys, for they shall lie under my pillow—under my own head, Mr. Caudle.

"You'll be ruined, but if I can help it, you shall ruin nobody but yourself.

"Oh! that hor—hor—hor—i—ble tob—ac—co!"

LECTURE III.

MR. CAUDLE JOINS A CLUB,—"THE SKYLARKS."

"I'm sure a poor woman had better be in her grave than married! That is, if she can't be married to a decent man! No: I don't care if you are tired, I *shan't* let you go to sleep. No, and I won't say what I have to say in the morning; I'll say it now. It's all very well for you to come home at what time you like—it's now half-past twelve—and expect I'm to hold my tongue, and let you go to sleep. What next, I wonder? A woman had better be sold for a slave at once.

"And so you've gone and joined a club! The Skylarks, indeed! A pretty skylark you'll make of yourself! But I won't stay and be ruined by you. No: I'm determined of that. I'll go and take the dear children, and you may get who you like to keep your house. That is, as long as you have a house to keep—and that won't be long, I know.

"How any decent man can go and spend his nights in a tavern!—oh, yes, Mr. Caudle; I dare say you *do* go for rational conversation. I should like to know how many of you would care for what you call rational conversation, if you had it without your filthy brandy-and-water; yes, and your more filthy tobacco-smoke. I'm sure the last time you came home, I had the head-ache for a week. But I know who it is who's taking you to destruction. It's that brute, Prettyman. He

has broken his own poor wife's heart, and now he wants to—but don't you think it, Mr. Caudle; I'll not have my peace of mind destroyed by the best man that ever trod. Oh, yes! I know you don't care so long as you can appear well to all the world,—but the world little thinks how you behave to me. It shall know it, though—that I'm determined.

"How any man can leave his own happy fireside to go and sit, and smoke, and drink, and talk with people who wouldn't one of 'em lift a finger to save him from hanging—how any man can leave his wife—and a good wife, too, though I say it—for a parcel of pot-companions—oh, it's disgraceful, Mr. Caudle: it's unfeeling. No man who had the least love for his wife could do it.

"And I suppose this is to be the case every Saturday? But I know what I'll do. I know—it's no use, Mr. Caudle, your calling me a good creature: I'm not such a fool as to be coaxed in that way. No: if you want to go to sleep, you should come home in Christian time, not at half-past twelve. There was a time, when you were as regular at your fireside as the kettle. That was when you were a decent man, and didn't go amongst, Heaven knows who, drinking and smoking, and making what you think your jokes. I never heard any good come to a man who cared about jokes. No respectable tradesman does. But I know what I'll do: I'll scare away your Skylarks. The house serves liquor after twelve of a Saturday; and if I don't write to the magistrates, and have the license taken away, I'm not lying in this bed this night. Yes, you may call me a foolish woman; but no, Mr. Caudle, no; it's you who are the foolish man: or worse than a foolish man; you're—a wicked one. If you were

to die to-morrow—and people who go to public-houses do all they can to shorten their lives—I should like to know who would write upon your tombstone, 'A tender husband and an affectionate father.' *I*—I'd have no such falsehoods told of you, I can assure you.

"Going and spending your money, and—nonsense! don't tell me—no, if you were to ten times swear it, I wouldn't believe that you only spent eighteen-pence on a Saturday. You can't be all those hours, and only spend eighteen-pence. I know better. I'm not quite a fool, Mr. Caudle. A great deal you could have for eighteen-pence! And all the Club married men and fathers of families. The more shame for 'em! Skylarks, indeed! They should call themselves Vultures; for they can only do as they do by robbing their innocent wives and children. Eighteen-pence a week! And if it was only that,—do you know what fifty-two eighteen-pences come to in a year? Do you ever think of that, and see the gowns I wear? I'm sure I can't, out of the house-money, buy myself a pincushion; though I've wanted one these six months. No—not so much as a ball of cotton. But what do you care, so you can get your brandy-and-water? There's the girls, too—the things they want! They're never dressed like other people's children. But it's all the same to their father. Oh, yes! So he can go with his Skylarks, they may wear sackcloth for pinafores, and packthread for garters.

"You'd better not let that Mr. Prettyman come here, that's all; or, rather, you'd better bring him once. Yes, I should like to see him. He wouldn't forget it. A man who, I may say, lives and moves only in a spittoon. A man who has a pipe in his mouth as constant as his front

teeth. A sort of tavern king, with a lot of fools, like you, to laugh at what he thinks his jokes, and give him consequence. No, Mr. Caudle, no; it 's no use your telling me to go to sleep, for I won't. Go to sleep, indeed! I 'm sure it 's almost time to get up. I hardly know what 's the use of coming to bed at all now.

"The Skylarks, indeed! I suppose you 'll be buying a 'Little Warbler,' and at your time of life, be trying to sing. The peacocks will sing next. A pretty name you 'll get in the neighbourhood; and, in a very little time, a nice face you 'll have. Your nose is getting redder already: and you 've just one of the noses that liquor always flies to. You don't see it 's red? No—I dare say not—but *I* see it; *I* see a great many things you don't. And so you 'll go on. In a little time, with your brandy-and-water—don't tell me that you only take two small glasses; I know what men's two small glasses are; in a little time you 'll have a face all over as if it was made of red currant jam. And I should like to know who 's to endure you then? I won't, and so don't think it. Don't come to me.

"Nice habits men learn at clubs! There 's Joskins: he was a decent creature once, and now I 'm told he has more than once boxed his wife's ears. He 's a Skylark, too. And I suppose, some day, you 'll be trying to box *my* ears? Don't attempt it, Mr. Caudle; I say, don't attempt it. Yes—it 's all very well for you to say you don't mean it,—but I only say again, don't attempt it. You 'd rue it till the day of your death, Mr. Caudle.

"Going and sitting for four hours at a tavern! What men, unless they had their wives with

them, can find to talk about, I can't think. No good, of course.

"Eighteen-pence a week—and drinking brandy-and-water, enough to swim a boat! And smoking like the funnel of a steam-ship! And I can't afford myself so much as a piece of tape! It 's brutal, Mr. Caudle. It 's ve-ve-ve—ry bru—tal."

And, says a note in the MS. by Mr. Caudle—"Here, thank heaven! yawning, she fell asleep."

LECTURE IV.

MR. CAUDLE HAS BEEN CALLED FROM HIS BED TO BAIL MR. PRETTYMAN FROM THE WATCH-HOUSE.

IE, Mr. Caudle, I knew it would come to this. I said it would, when you joined those precious Sky-larks. People being called out of their beds at all hours of the night to bail a set of fellows who are never so happy as when they 're leading sober men to destruction. I should like to know what the neighbours will think of you, with people from the police knocking at the door at two in the morning. Don't tell me that the man has been ill-used: he 's not the man to be ill-used. And you must go and bail him. I know the end of that: he 'll run away, and you 'll have to pay the money. I should like

to know what 's the use of my working and slaving to save a farthing, when you throw away pounds upon your precious Skylarks. A pretty cold you 'll have to-morrow morning, being called out of your warm bed this weather; but don't you think I 'll nurse you—not I; not a drop of gruel do you get from me.

"I 'm sure you 've plenty of ways of spending your money—not throwing it away upon a set of dissolute peace-breakers. It 's all very well for you to say you haven't thrown away your money, but you will. He 'll be certain to run off; it isn't likely he 'll go upon his trial, and you 'll be fixed with the bail. Don't tell me there 's no trial in the matter, because I know there is; it 's for something more than quarrelling with the policeman that he was locked up. People aint locked up for that. No, it 's for robbery, or something worse, perhaps.

"And as you 've bailed him, people will think you are as bad as he is. Don't tell me you couldn't help bailing him; you should have shown yourself a respectable man, and have let him been sent to prison.

"Now people know you 're the friend of drunken and other disorderly persons, you 'll never have a night's sleep in your bed. Not that it would matter what fell upon you, if it wasn't your poor wife who suffered. Of course all the business will be in the newspapers, and your name with it. I shouldn't wonder, too, if they give your picture as they do the other folks of the Old Bailey. A pretty thing that, to go down to your children. I 'm sure it will be enough to make them change their name. No, I shall not go to sleep; it 's all very well for you to say, go to sleep, after such a disturbance. I shall not go——"

But here, says Mr. Caudle's manuscript, happily she slumbered; for Mr. Caudle had, considering the theme she had to talk upon, a remarkably short lecture.

LECTURE V.

MR. CAUDLE HAS REMAINED DOWN STAIRS TILL PAST ONE, WITH A FRIEND.

PRETTY time of night to come to bed, Mr. Caudle. Ugh! As cold, too, as any ice. Enough to give any woman her death, I'm sure. What! I shouldn't have locked up the coals, indeed? If I hadn't, I've no doubt the fellow would have staid all night. It's all very well for you, Mr. Caudle, to bring people home,—but I wish you'd think first what's for supper. That beautiful leg of pork would have served for our dinner to-morrow,—and now it's gone. *I* can't keep the house upon the money, and I won't pretend to do it, if you bring a mob of people every night to clear the cupboard.

"I wonder who'll be so ready to give you a supper when you want one; for want one you will, unless you change your plans. Don't tell me! I know I'm right. You'll first be eaten up,

and then you 'll be laughed at. I know the world. No, indeed, Mr. Caudle, I don't think ill of everybody; don't say that. But I can't see a leg of pork eaten up in that way, without asking myself what it 's all to end in if such things go on? And then he must have pickles, too! Couldn't be content with my cabbage—no, Mr. Caudle, I won't let you go to sleep. It 's very well for you to say let you go to sleep, after you 've kept me awake till this time. *Why* did I keep awake? How do you suppose I could go to sleep, when I knew that man was below drinking up your substance in brandy-and-water? for he couldn't be content upon decent, wholesome gin. Upon my word, you ought to be a rich man, Mr. Caudle. You have such very fine friends. I wonder who gives you brandy when you go out!

"No, indeed, he couldn't be content with my pickled cabbage—and I should like to know who makes better—but he must have walnuts. And you, too, like a fool—now, don't you think to stop me, Mr. Caudle; a poor woman may be trampled to death, and never say a word—you, too, like a fool—I wonder who 'd do it for you—to insist upon the girl going out for pickled walnuts. And in such a night too! With snow upon the ground. Yes; you 're a man of fine feelings, you are, Mr. Caudle! but the world doesn't know you as I know you—fine feelings, indeed! to send the poor girl out, when I told you and told your friend, too—a pretty brute he is, I 'm sure—that the poor girl had got a cold and chilblains on her toes. But I know what will be the end of that; she 'll be laid up, and we shall have a nice doctor's bill. And you 'll pay it, I can tell you—for *I* wont.

"Wish you were out of the world? Oh! yes, that 's all very easy, I 'm sure *I* might wish it.

Don't swear in that dreadful way! Ain't you afraid that the bed will open and swallow you? And don't swing about in that way. *That* will do no good. *That* won't bring back the leg of pork,—and the brandy you 've poured down both of your throats. Oh, I know it! I 'm sure of it. I only recollected it when I 'd got into bed,—and if it hadn't been so cold, you 'd have seen me down stairs again, I can tell you—I recollected it, and a pretty two hours I 've passed, that I left the key in the cupboard,—and I knew it—I could see by the manner of you, when you came into the room—I know you 've got the other bottle. However, there's one comfort: you told me to send for the best brandy—the very best—for your other friend, who called last Wednesday. Ha! ha! It was British—the cheapest British—and nice and ill I hope the pair of you will be to-morrow.

"There's only the bare bone of the leg of pork: but you 'll get nothing else for dinner, I can tell you. It 's a dreadful thing that the poor children should go without,—but, if they have such a father, they, poor things, must suffer for it.

"Nearly a whole leg of pork and a pint of brandy! A pint of brandy and a leg of pork. A leg of—leg—leg——pint—"

And mumbling the syllables, says Mr. Caudle's MS., she went to sleep.

LECTURE VI.

MR. CAUDLE HAS LENT AN ACQUAINTANCE THE FAMILY UMBRELLA. MRS. CAUDLE LECTURES THEREON.

Bah! That's the third umbrella gone since Christmas. What were you to do! Why let him go home in the rain, to be sure. I'm very certain there was nothing about *him* that could spoil. Take cold, indeed! He doesn't look like one of the sort to take cold. Besides he'd have better taken cold than take our only umbrella. Do you hear the rain, Mr. Caudle? I say, do you hear the rain? And as I'm alive, if it isn't Saint Swithin's day! Do you hear it against the windows? Nonsense; you don't impose upon me. You can't be asleep with such a shower as that! Do you hear it, I say? Oh you *do* hear it! Well, that's a pretty flood, I think, to last for six weeks; and no stirring all the time out of the house. Pooh! Don't think me a fool, Mr. Caudle. Don't insult me. *He* return the umbrella! Anybody would think you were born yesterday. As if anybody ever *did* return an umbrella! There—do you hear it? Worse and worse! Cats and dogs, and for six weeks—always six weeks. And no umbrella!

"I should like to know how the children are to get to school to-morrow. They shan't go through such weather, I'm determined. No: they shall stop at home and never learn anything—the blessed creatures!—sooner than go and get wet. And when they grow up, I wonder who they'll have

to thank for knowing nothing—who, indeed, but their father? People who can't feel for their own children ought never to be fathers.

"But I know why you lent the umbrella. Oh, yes; I know very well. I was going out to tea at dear mother's to-morrow,—you knew that; and you did it on purpose. Don't tell me; you hate me to go there, and take every mean advantage to hinder me. But don't you think it, Mr. Caudle. No, sir; if it comes down in buckets-full, I 'll go all the more. No: and I won't have a cab! Where do you think the money's to come from? You 've got nice high notions at that club of yours! A cab, indeed! Cost me sixteenpence at least — sixteenpence! — two-and-eightpence, for there 's back again! Cabs, indeed! I should like to know who 's to pay for 'em? *I* can't pay for 'em; and I 'm sure *you* can't, if you go on as you do; throwing away your property, and beggaring your children—buying umbrellas?

"Do you hear the rain, Mr. Caudle? I say do you hear it? But I don't care—I 'll go to mother's to-morrow: I will; and what 's more, I 'll walk every step of the way,—and you know that will give me my death. Don't call me a foolish woman —it 's you that 's the foolish man. You know I can't wear clogs; and with no umbrella, that 's sure to give me a cold—it always does. But what do you care for that? Nothing at all. I may be laid up for what you care, as I dare say I shall— and a pretty doctor's bill there 'll be. I hope there will! It will teach you to lend your umbrellas again. I shouldn't wonder if I caught my death; yes: and that 's what you lent the umbrella for. Of course.

"Nice clothes, I shall get too, trapesing through weather like this. My gown and bonnet will be

spoilt quite. Needn't I wear 'em then? Indeed, Mr. Caudle, I *shall* wear 'em. No, sir, I 'm not going out a dowdy to please you or anybody else. Gracious knows! it isn't often that I step over the threshold; indeed, I might as well be a slave at once,—better, I should say. But when I do go out, Mr. Caudle, I choose to go as a lady. Oh! that rain—if it isn't enough to break in the windows.

"Ugh! I do look forward with dread for to-morrow. How I am to go to mother's I 'm sure I can't tell. But if I die, I 'll do it. No, sir; I won't borrow an umbrella. No; and you shan't buy one. (*With great emphasis.*) Mr. Caudle, if you bring home another umbrella, I 'll throw it in the street. I 'll have my own umbrella or none at all.

"Ha! and it was only last week I had a new nozle put to that umbrella. I 'm sure if I 'd have known as much as I do now, it might have gone without one for me. Paying for new nozles, for other people to laugh at you. Oh, it 's all very well for you—you can go to sleep. You've no thought of your poor patient wife, and your own dear children. You think of nothing but lending umbrellas!

"Men, indeed!—Call themselves lords of the creation!—pretty lords when they can't take care of an umbrella!

"I know that walk to-morrow will be the death of me. But that 's what you want—then you may go to your club, and do as you like—and then, nicely my poor dear children will be used—but then, sir, then you 'll be happy. Oh, don't tell me! I know you will. Else you 'd never have lent the umbrella!

"You have to go on Thursday about that sum-

mons; and, of course, you can't go. No, indeed, you *don't* go without the umbrella. You may lose the debt for what I care—it won't be so much as spoiling your clothes—better lose it: people deserve to lose debts who lend umbrellas.

"And I should like to know how I'm to go to mother's without the umbrella? Oh, don't tell me that I said I *would* go—that 's nothing to do with it; nothing at all. She 'll think I 'm neglecting her, and the little money we were to have, we shan't have at all—because we 've no umbrella.

"The children, too! Dear things! They 'll be sopping wet: for they shan't stop at home—they shan't lose their learning; it 's all their father will leave 'em, I 'm sure. But they *shall* go to school. Don't tell me I said they shouldn't: you are so aggravating, Caudle; you 'd spoil the temper of an angel. They *shall* go to school; mark that. And if they get their deaths of cold, it 's not my fault—*I* didn't lend the umbrella."

"Here," says Caudle in his MS, "I fell asleep; and dreamt that the sky was turned into green calico, with whalebone ribs; that, in fact, the whole world revolved under a tremendous umbrella!"

LECTURE VII.

MR. CAUDLE HAS VENTURED A REMONSTRANCE ON HIS DAY'S DINNER: COLD MUTTON, AND NO PUDDING. MRS. CAUDLE DEFENDS THE COLD SHOULDER.

UMPH! I'm sure! Well! I wonder what it will be next! There's nothing proper, now — nothing at all. Better get somebody else to keep the house I think. I can't do it now, it seems; I'm only in the way here: I 'd better take the children, and go.

"What am I grumbling about now? It 's very well for you to ask that! I 'm sure I 'd better be out of the world than—there now, Mr. Caudle; there you are again! I *shall* speak, sir. It isn't often I open my mouth, heaven knows! But you like to hear nobody talk but yourself. You ought to have married a negro slave, and not any respectable woman.

"You 're to go about the house looking like thunder all the day, and I 'm not to say a word. Where do you think pudding 's to come from every-day? You show a nice example to your children, you do; complaining, and turning your nose up at a sweet piece of cold mutton, because there 's no pudding! You go a nice way to make 'em extravagant—teach 'em nice lessons to begin

the world with. Do you know what puddings cost; or do you think they fly in at the window?

"You hate cold mutton. The more shame for you, Mr. Caudle. I'm sure you've the stomach of a lord, you have. No, sir; I didn't choose to hash the mutton. It's very easy for you to say hash it; but *I* know what a joint loses in hashing: it's a day's dinner the less, if it's a bit. Yes, I dare say; other people may have puddings with cold mutton. No doubt of it; and other people become bankrupts. But if ever you get into the Gazette, it shan't be *my* fault—no; I'll do my duty as a wife to you, Mr. Caudle; you shall never have it to say that it was *my* housekeeping that brought you to beggary. No; you may sulk at the cold meat—ha! I hope you'll never live to want such a piece of cold mutton as we had to-day! And you may threaten to go to a tavern to dine; but with our present means, not a crumb of pudding do you get from me. You shall have nothing but the cold joint—nothing as I'm a Christian sinner.

"Yes; there you are, throwing those fowls in my face again! I know you once brought home a pair of fowls; I know it; and wern't you mean enough to want to stop 'em out of my week's money? Oh, the selfishness—the shabbiness of men! They can go out and throw away pounds upon pounds with a pack of people who laugh at 'em afterwards; but if it's anything wanted for their own homes, their poor wives may hunt for it. I wonder you don't blush to name those fowls again! I wouldn't be so little for the world, Mr. Caudle!

"What are you going to do? Going to get up? Don't make yourself ridiculous, Mr. Caudle; I can't say a word to you like any other wife, but

you must threaten to get up. *Do* be ashamed of yourself.

"Puddings, indeed! Do you think I'm made of puddings? Didn't you have some boiled rice three weeks ago? Besides, is this the time of the year for puddings? It's all very well if I had money enough allowed me like any other wife to keep the house with; then, indeed, I might have preserves, like any other woman; now, it's impossible; and it's cruel—yes, Mr. Caudle, cruel—of you to expect it.

"Apples arn't so dear, arn't they? I know what apples are, Mr. Caudle, without your telling me. But I suppose you want something more than apples for dumplings? I suppose sugar costs something, doesn't it? And that's how it is. That's how one expense brings on another, and that's how people go to ruin.

"Pancakes! What's the use of your lying muttering there about pancakes? Don't you always have 'em once a-year—every Shrove Tuesday? And what would any moderate, decent man want more?

"Pancakes, indeed! Pray, Mr. Caudle,—no, it's no use your saying fine words to me to let you go to sleep; I shan't!—pray do you know the price of eggs just now? There's not an egg you can trust to under seven and eight a shilling; well, you've only just to reckon up how many eggs—don't lie swearing there at the eggs, in that manner, Mr. Caudle; unless you expect the bed to open under you. You call yourself a respectable tradesman, I suppose! Ha! I only wish people knew you as well as I do! Swearing at eggs, indeed! But I'm tired of this usage, Mr. Caudle; quite tired of it; and I don't care how soon it's ended!

"I 'm sure I do nothing but work and labour, and think how to make the most of everything; and this is how I 'm rewarded. I should like to see anybody whose joints go further than mine. But if I was to throw away your money into the street, or lay it out in fine feathers on myself, I should be better thought of. The woman who studies her husband and her family is always made a drudge of. It 's your fine fal-lal wives who 've the best time of it.

"What 's the use of your lying groaning there in that manner? That won't make me hold my tongue, I can tell you. You think to have it all your own way — but you won't, Mr. Caudle! You can insult my dinner; look like a demon, I may say, at a wholesome piece of cold mutton— ha! the thousands of far better creatures than you are who 'd been thankful for that mutton!— and I 'm never to speak! But you 're mistaken— I will! Your usage of me, Mr. Caudle, is infamous —unworthy of a man. I only wish people knew you for what you are; but they shall, some day.

"Puddings! And now I suppose I shall hear of nothing but puddings! Yes, and I know what it would end in. First, you 'd have a pudding every day;—oh, I know your extravagance—then you 'd go for fish—then I shouldn't wonder if you 'd have soup; turtle, no doubt: then you 'd go for a dessert; and—oh! I see it all as plain as the quilt before me—but no! not while I live! What your second wife may do, I don't know; perhaps *she*'ll be a fine lady; but you shan't be ruined by me, Mr. Caudle; that I 'm determined. Puddings, indeed! Pu-dding-s! Pudd—"

"Exhausted nature," says Caudle, "could hold no longer. Here my wife went to sleep."

LECTURE VIII.

CAUDLE HAS BEEN MADE A MASON.—MRS. CAUDLE INDIGNANT AND CURIOUS.

"Now, Mr. Caudle—Mr. Caudle, I say: oh! you can't be asleep already, I know—Now, what I mean to say is this; there 's no use, none at all, in our having any disturbance about the matter; but, at last my mind 's made up, Mr. Caudle; I shall leave you. Either I know all you 've been doing to-night, or to-morrow morning I quit the house. No, no; there 's an end of the marriage-state, I think—an end of all confidence between man and wife—if a husband 's to have secrets and keep 'em all to himself. Pretty secrets they must be, when his own wife can't know 'em. Not fit for any decent person to know, I 'm sure, if that 's the case. Now, Caudle, don't let us quarrel; there 's a good soul, tell me what 's it all about? A pack of nonsense, I dare say; still—not that I care much about it—still, I *should* like to know. There 's a dear. Eh? Oh, don't tell me there 's nothing in it; I know better. I 'm not a fool, Mr. Caudle; I know there 's a good deal in it. Now, Caudle, just tell me a little bit of it. I 'm sure I 'd tell you anything. You know I would. Well?

"Caudle, you're enough to vex a saint! Now, don't you think you 're going to sleep; because you 're not. Do you suppose I 'd ever suffered you to go and be made a mason, if I didn't suppose I was to know the secret, too? Not that it 's anything to know, I dare say; and that 's why I 'm determined to know it.

"But I know what it is; oh yes, there can be no doubt. The secret is, to ill-use poor women; to tyrannize over 'em; to make 'em your slaves; especially your wives. It must be something of the sort, or you wouldn't be ashamed to have it known. What 's right and proper never need be done in secret. It 's an insult to a woman for a man to be a free-mason, and let his wife know nothing of it. But, poor soul! she 's sure to know it somehow — for nice husbands they all make. Yes, yes; a part of the secret is to think better of all the world than their own wives and families. I 'm sure men have quite enough to care for—that is, if they act properly—to care for them they have at home. They can't have much care to spare for the world besides.

"And I suppose they call you *Brother* Caudle? A pretty brother, indeed! Going and dressing yourself up in an apron, like a turnpike man—for that 's what you look like. And I should like to know what the apron 's for? There must be something in it not very respectable, I 'm sure. Well, I only wish I was Queen for a day or two. I 'd put an end to free-masonry, and all such trumpery, I know.

"Now, come, Caudle, don't let 's quarrel. Eh! You 're not in pain, dear? What 's it all about? What are you lying laughing there at? But I 'm a fool to trouble my head about you.

"And you 're not going to let me know the secret, eh? You mean to say, — you 're not? Now, Caudle, you know it 's a hard matter to put me in a passion—not that I care about the secret itself: no, I wouldn't give a button to know it, for it 's all nonsense, I 'm sure. It isn't the secret I care about: it 's the slight, Mr. Caudle; it's the studied insult that a man pays to his wife, when

he thinks of going through the world keeping something to himself which he won't let her know. Man and wife one, indeed! I should like to know how that can be when a man 's a mason—when he keeps a secret that sets him and his wife apart? Ha, you men make the laws, and so you take good care to have all the best of 'em to yourselves; otherwise a woman ought to be allowed a divorce when a man becomes a mason. When he 's got a sort of corner-cupboard in his heart—a secret place in his mind—that his poor wife isn't allowed to rummage!

"Caudle, you shan't close your eyes for a week—no, you shan't—unless you tell me some of it. Come, there 's a good creature; there 's a love. I 'm sure, Caudle, I wouldn't refuse you anything—and you know it, or ought to know it by this time. I only wish I had a secret! To whom should I think of confiding it, but to my dear husband? I should be miserable to keep it to myself, and you know it. Now, Caudle!

"Was there ever such a man? A man, indeed! A brute!—yes, Mr. Caudle, an unfeeling, brutal creature, when you might oblige me, and you won't. I 'm sure I don't object to your being a mason; not at all, Caudle; I dare say it 's a very good thing; I dare say it is—it 's only your making a secret of it that vexes me. But you 'll tell me—you 'll tell your own Margaret? You won't! You 're a wretch, Mr. Caudle.

"But I know why: oh, yes, I can tell. The fact is, you 're ashamed to let me know what a fool they 've been making of you. That 's it. You, at your time of life—the father of a family. I should be ashamed of myself, Caudle.

"And I suppose you 'll be going to what you call your Lodge every night, now. Lodge, indeed!

Pretty place it must be, where they don't admit women. Nice goings on, I dare say. Then you call one another brethren. Brethren! I 'm sure you 'd relations enough; you didn't want any more.

"But I know what all this masonry 's about. It 's only an excuse to get away from your wives and families, that you may feast and drink together, that 's all. That 's the secret. And to abuse women,—as if they were inferior animals, and not to be trusted. That 's the secret; and nothing else.

"Now, Caudle, don't let us quarrel. Yes, I know you 're in pain. Still, Caudle, my love; Caudle! Dearest, I say! Caudle! Caud—"

"I recollect nothing more," says Caudle, "for here, thank Providence! I fell asleep."

LECTURE IX.

MR. CAUDLE HAS BEEN TO GREENWICH FAIR.

EM! — So, Mr. Caudle: I hope you enjoyed yourself at Greenwich. How do I know you've been at Greenwich? I know it very well, sir: know all about it: know more than you think I know. I thought there was something in the wind. Yes; I was sure of it, when you went out of the house, to-day. I knew it by the looks of you, though I didn't say anything. Upon my word! And you call yourself a respectable man, and the father of a family! Going to a fair amongst all sorts of people,—at your time of life. Yes; and never think of taking your wife with you. Oh, no! you can go and enjoy yourself out, with, *I* don't know who: go out, and make yourself very pleasant, I dare say. Don't tell me; I hear what a nice companion Mr. Caudle is: what a good-tempered person. Ha! I only wish people could see you at home, that's all. But so it is with men. They can keep all their good temper for out-of-doors—their wives never see any of it. Oh, dear! I'm sure I don't know who'd be a poor woman!

"Now, Caudle, I'm not in an ill temper; not at all. I know I used to be a fool when we were

first married: I used to worry and fret myself to death, when you went out; but I've got over that. I wouldn't put myself out of the way now for the best man that ever trod. For what thanks does a poor woman get? None at all. No: it's those who don't care for their families, who are the best thought of. I only wish I could bring myself not to care for mine.

"And why couldn't you say, like a man, you were going to Greenwich Fair, when you went out? It's no use your saying that, Mr. Caudle: don't tell me that you didn't think of going; you'd made your mind up to it, and you know it. Pretty games you've had, no doubt! I should like to have been behind you, that's all. A man at your time of life!

"And I, of course, I never want to go out. Oh, no! I may stay at home with the cat. You couldn't think of taking your wife and children, like any other decent man, to a fair. Oh, no; you never care to be seen with us. I'm sure, many people don't know you're married: how can they? Your wife's never seen with you. Oh, no; anybody but those belonging to you!

"Greenwich Fair, indeed! Yes,—and of course you went up and down the hill, running and racing with nobody knows who. Don't tell me; I know what you are when you're out. You don't suppose, Mr. Caudle, I've forgotten that pink bonnet, do you? No: I won't hold my tongue, and I'm not a foolish woman. It's no matter, sir, if the pink bonnet was fifty years ago—it's all the same for that. No: and if I live for fifty years to come, I never will leave off talking of it. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Caudle. Ha! few wives would have been what I've been to you. I only wish my time was to come

over again, that's all; I wouldn't be the fool I have been.

"Going to a fair! and I suppose you had your fortune told by the gypsies? You needn't have wasted your money. I'm sure I can tell you your fortune if you go on as you do. Yes, the gaol will be your fortune, Mr. Caudle. And it would be no matter—none at all—if your wife and children didn't suffer with you.

"And then you must go riding upon donkeys—you didn't go riding upon donkeys? Yes; it's very well for you to say so; but I dare say you did. I tell you, Caudle, I know what you are when you're out. I wouldn't trust any of you—you, especially, Caudle.

"Then you must go in the thick of the fair, and have the girls scratching your coat with rattles! You couldn't help it, if they did scratch your coat? Don't tell me; people don't scratch coats unless they're encouraged to do it. And you must go in a swing, too. You didn't go in a swing? And I'm a foolish woman to think so, am I? Well, if you didn't, it was no fault of yours; you wished to go, I've no doubt.

"And then you must go into the shows? There, —you don't deny that. You *did* go into a show. What of it, Mr. Caudle? A good deal of it, sir. Nice crowding and squeezing in those shows, I know. Pretty places! And you a married man and the father of a family. No: I won't hold my tongue. It's very well for you to threaten to get up. You're to go to Greenwich Fair, and race up and down the hill, and play at kiss in the ring. Pah! it's disgusting, Mr. Caudle. Oh, I dare say you *did* play at it; if you didn't, you'd have liked, and that's just as bad;—and you can go into swings, and shows, and roundabouts. If I

was you, I should hide my head under the clothes, and be ashamed of myself.

"And what is most selfish—most mean of you, Caudle—you can go and enjoy yourself, and never so much as bring home for the poor children a gingerbread-nut. Don't tell me that your pocket was picked of a pound of nuts! Nice company you must have been in to have your pocket picked.

"But I dare say I shall hear all about it to-morrow. I've no doubt, sir, you were dancing at the Crown-and-Anchor. I should like to have seen you. No: I 'm not making myself ridiculous. It 's you that 's making yourself ridiculous; and everybody that knows you says so. Everybody knows what I have to put up with from you.

"Going to a fair, indeed! At your time——"

"Here," says Caudle, "I dozed off, hearing confusedly the words—hill—gypsies—rattles—round-about—swings—pink bonnet—nuts."

LECTURE X.

ON MR. CAUDLE'S SHIRT-BUTTONS.

THERE, Mr. Caudle, I hope you 're in a little better temper than you were this morning? There —you needn't begin to whistle: people don't come to bed to whistle. But it 's like you. I can't speak, that you don't try to insult me. Once, I used to say, you were the best creature living: now, you get quite a fiend. *Do* let you rest? No: I won't let you rest. It 's the only time I have to talk to you, and you *shall* hear me. I 'm put upon all day long: it 's very hard if I can't speak a word at night; and it isn't often I open my mouth, goodness knows!

"Because *once* in your lifetime your shirt wanted a button, you must almost swear the roof off the house! You *didn't* swear? Ha, Mr. Caudle! you don't know what you do when you 're in a passion. You were not in a passion, wer'n't you? Well, then, I don't know what a passion is — and I think I ought by this time. I 've lived long enough with you, Mr. Caudle, to know that.

"It 's a pity you havn't something worse to complain of than a button off your shirt. If you'd *some* wives, you would, I know. I 'm sure I 'm never without a needle-and-thread in my hand. What with you and the children, I 'm made a perfect slave of. And what 's my thanks? Why, if once in your life a button 's off your shirt — what do you cry '*oh*' at? I say once, Mr. Cau-

dle; or twice, or three times, at most. I'm sure, Caudle, no man's buttons in the world are better looked after than your's. I only wish I'd kept the shirts you had when you were first married! I should like to know where were your buttons then?

"Yes, it *is* worth talking of! But that's how you always try to put me down. You fly into a rage, and then if I only try to speak, you won't hear me. That's how you men always will have all the talk to yourselves: a poor woman isn't allowed to get a word in.

"A nice notion you have of a wife, to suppose she's nothing to think of but her husband's buttons. A pretty notion, indeed, you have of marriage. Ha! if poor women only knew what they had to go through! What with buttons, and one thing and another! They'd never tie themselves up to the best man in the world, I'm sure. What would they do, Mr. Caudle? Why, do much better without you, I'm certain.

"And it's my belief, after all, that the button wasn't off the shirt: it's my belief that you pulled it off, that you might have something to talk about. Oh, you're aggravating enough, when you like, for anything! All I know is, it's very odd that the button should be off the shirt; for I'm sure no woman's a greater slave to her husband's buttons than I am. I only say, it's very odd.

"However, there's one comfort; it can't last long. I'm worn to death with your temper, and sha'n't trouble you a great while. Ha, you may laugh! And I dare say you would laugh! I've no doubt of it! That's your love — that's your feeling! I know that I'm sinking every day, though I say nothing about it. And when I'm

gone, we shall see how your second wife will look after your buttons! You 'll find out the difference, then. Yes, Caudle, you 'll think of me, then: for then, I hope, you 'll never have a blessed button to your back.

"No, I 'm not a vindictive woman, Mr. Caudle, nobody ever called me that, but you. What do you say? Nobody ever knew so much of me? That 's nothing at all to do with it. Ha! I wouldn't have your aggravating temper, Caudle, for mines of gold. It 's a good thing I 'm not as worrying as you are—or a nice house there 'd be between us. I only wish you 'd had a wife that *would* have talked to you! then you 'd have known the difference. But you impose upon me, because, like a poor fool, I say nothing. I should be ashamed of myself, Caudle.

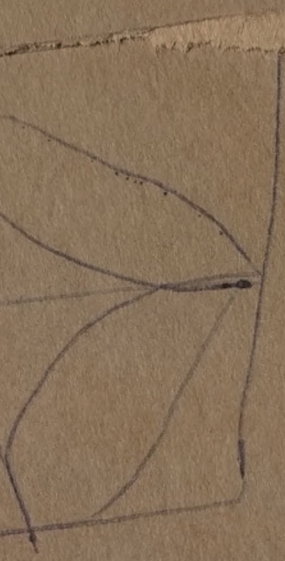
"And a pretty example you set as a father; You 'll make your boys as bad as yourself. Talking as you did all breakfast-time about your buttons! And of a Sunday morning too! And you call yourself a Christian! I should like to know what your boys will say of you when they grow up? And all about a paltry button off one of your wristbands: a decent man wouldn't have mentioned it. Why won't I hold my tongue? Because I *won't* hold my tongue. I 'm to have my peace of mind destroyed—I 'm to be worried into my grave for a miserable shirt-button, and I 'm to hold my tongue! Oh! but that 's just like you, men!

"But I know what I 'll do for the future. Every button you have may drop off, and I won't so much as put a thread to 'em. And I should like to know what you 'll do then? Oh, you must get somebody else to sew 'em, must you? That 's a pretty threat for a husband to hold out to a wife!

And to such a wife as I've been, too: such a negro-slave to your buttons, as I may say! Somebody else to sew 'em, eh? No, Caudle, no: not while I'm alive! When I'm dead — and with what I have to bear there's no knowing how soon that may be—when I'm dead, I say—oh! what a brute you must be to snore so!

"You're not snoring? Ha! that's what you always say; but that's nothing to do with it. You must get somebody else to sew 'em, must you? Ha! I shouldn't wonder. Oh, no! I should be surprised at nothing, now! Nothing at all! It's what people have always told me it would come to, — and now, the buttons have opened my eyes! But the whole world shall know of your cruelty, Mr. Caudle. After the wife I've been to you. Somebody else, indeed, to sew your buttons! I'm no longer to be mistress in my own house! Ha, Caudle! I wouldn't have upon my conscience what you have, for the world! I wouldn't treat anybody as you treat—no, I'm not mad! It's you, Mr. Caudle, who are mad, or bad — and that's worse! I can't even so much as speak of a shirt-button, but that I'm threatened to be made nobody of in my own house! Caudle, you've a heart like a hearth-stone, you have! To threaten me, and only because a button — a button——"

"I was conscious of no more than this," says Caudle, in his MS., "for here nature relieved me with a sweet, deep sleep."



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